A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

ST. THOMAS'S,

JAN. 1, 1789.

BY

GEORGE LEWIS.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTRUCTION CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED;

IN A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

S$_{T.}$ THOMAS's,

JANUARY 1, 1789,

FOR THE

BENEFIT of the CHARITY-SCHOOL,

IN

GRAVEL-LANE, SOUTHWARK.

BY

GEORGE LEWIS.

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A

SERMON, &c.

PROVERBS, Vth, 23.

They ſhall die without inſtruction, and in the greatneſs of their folly they ſhall go aſtray.

IN the book of Proverbs, which is properly a collection of prudential and pious maxims, are thrown together ſeveral ſhort and pithy ſentences which have no immediate connection with one another, but are properly diſtinct queſtions, well adapted to ſtrike the memory and affect the heart. The obſervations here made are ſuch as are of great importance to the proper regulation of our conduct in all the circumſtances of life. The deſign of the book is to impreſs upon our minds this grand truth, that ſin is in the abſtract, folly, and that religion is the trueſt wiſdom; or, in other words, that wicked men are the greateſt

of fools, and the virtuous the only wiſe. Accordingly you find the ſeveral conſequences of ſin and of religion enumerated, and ſet one againſt the other, ſo that almoſt every verſe contains a beautiful antitheſis. He deſcribes virtue and vice in their true colours. He repreſents the former as the moſt amiable and lovely; the latter as the moſt pernicious and deformed of all objects. And Solomon was well acquainted with the nature of both. He had taſted all the ſweets which his voluptuous heart deſired, and his royal power could provide. He had finiſhed an extenſive career of folly when he made that melancholy confeſſion, " Vanity of vanities all is " vanity." As the reflection upon his paſt life could not yield him one ſolid thought, he gave his voice in favour of religion, and recommends it as the moſt powerful antidote againſt vexation of ſpirit, in thoſe ſtriking words, " Let us hear " the concluſion of the whole matter, fear God " and keep his commandments, for this is the " whole of man," the whole of his buſineſs and his intereſt.

Solomon wrote this book of Proverbs *principally* with a view to the benefit of the young. It is intended, as he himſelf informs us, " To " teach the young man knowledge and diſcre- " tion." In the ſequel of the 5th chapter, he points out the dreadful end of ſuch as run into the

the exceſſes to which they are prompted by their youthful luſts. Deſpiſing the wiſe council of their beſt friends, they die without inſtruction, and through the greatneſs of their folly precipitate themſelves into unexpected miſery.

What I propoſe at preſent is

I. To ſhew the importance of inſtruction to man, as an inhabitant of this world, and as a candidate for another,

And,

II. To define the period when inſtruction may with moſt advantage be communicated.

In diſcourſing on a ſubject upon which ſo many excellent treatiſes have been written, and ſo many excellent ſermons preached, it will not be expected that any thing new or uncommon can be advanced. I can only inculcate the ſame truths upon your memories which you have heard a thouſand times, and concerning the importance of which you are already well apprized.

I am in the firſt place to ſhew the importance of inſtruction to man, as an inhabitant of this world, and as a candidate for another.

Inſtruction, as productive of ſubordination, order and harmony in ſociety, is by the Deity wiſely

wiſely made the ſource of ſo many advantages to the individual, and is ſo inſeparably connected with every thing he can poſſeſs or hope for, of ſecurity, comfort and happineſs, that it muſt of neceſſity become an object of primary and general importance. Impreſſed with an opinion of its vaſt magnitude, legiſlatures have provided for its adminiſtration; and the wiſeſt men in the moſt enlightened ages and countries, have unanimouſly agreed in repreſenting it as of the utmoſt conſequence. It is now very generally allowed, that the great difference which ſubſiſts between the rude uninformed ſavage, and the inhabitants of civilized kingdoms and ſtates, does not ariſe ſo much from any defect in natural abilities, as from the want of opportunities to exerciſe and improve them. In other words, it is very generally allowed, that inſtruction or education makes the man. That there is a very material difference in the natural abilities of different perſons, will not be diſputed: but the beſt natural capacities without inſtruction can never exert and ſhew themſelves to advantage. Man is poſſeſſed of a rational nature, which, agreeably to the plan of divine wiſdom, ſtands in need of being nurtured and cheriſhed, of being trained up, and formed to dignity, uſefulneſs, and happineſs. Endowed with faculties capable of great improvements, which improvements depend upon a free and wiſe exerciſe of theſe faculties, it is of

vaſt

vaſt importance, that as he grows in years he ſhould grow in knowledge.

At this period of time, ſociety is ſo conſtituted, and the movements of its members in countries that are conſiderably advanced in civilization, are ſo complicate, that a conſiderable ſhare of knowledge is neceſſary as a ſafeguard, againſt thoſe miſtakes and follies which would make him ridiculous and contemptible. The rude and untutored mind is deprived of the ſolid and ſubſtantial pleaſures to be derived from virtuous friendſhip and intelligent ſociety. It taſtes none of thoſe enjoyments which the well informed experience in peruſing the records of paſt time, in acquainting itſelf with the truths of nature, with the wonders ſhe diſplays in going over the ſtones of moral and religious knowledge. It remains a ſtranger to thoſe ſources of refined gratification that are peculiar to well inſtructed and intelligent beings.

To acquire a competent knowledge on every ſubject which has a tendency, however remote, to increaſe the comfort and uſefulneſs of life, is very deſireable. An extenſive acquaintance with the ſeveral branches of ſcience is moſt indiſputably an excellent attainment; and of no inconſiderable advantage in a religious view. Indeed, there

there is no branch of real knowledge which it is not well worth our while to purſue.

Having made this preliminary remark, I obſerve that *knowledge in general* is not to be conſidered as *of primary importance* to man, when conſidered in his moral capacity, as the candidate for another world. But for the ſoul to be without moral and religious knowledge, that knowledge which is neceſſary to direct his practice, and conduct to that happineſs deſigned for him by the great Author of his being, it is not good. Ignorance is really dreadful here. Deſtitute of moral and religious inſtruction, or proper information reſpecting thoſe duties we owe to God and our fellow creatures, we ſhall be in danger of being diverted from them by the moſt ſlight inducements. Ignorant of their true value and tendency, we ſhall never perform them in a proper manner. Perhaps from habit and cuſtom we may pay them ſome attention, yet we ſhall derive from them none of thoſe comforts and benefits which would ſtrengthen our attention, and increaſe our zeal and diligence in diſcharging them. Thus ſhall we fulfil obligations of the moſt rational and binding nature, if they are fulfilled at all, from no better motive than thoſe which actuate the honeſt devotee to conform to every abſurd ceremony which his country venerates. Such ſlender holds will eaſily give way when temptations of no very formidable nature aſſail.

aſſail. And when once a ſingle ſtep is taken in a courſe of ſinful indulgence, it becomes a very hazardous caſe. The firſt movements to what is vicious are infinitely the moſt difficult. Conſcience, that vicegerent of the Creator, which is ſeated in the human ſoul as an advocate for God and goodneſs, before it is hardened by repeated acts of iniquity, is very delicate and ſenſible. Before the ſinner can plunge into the depths of impiety, this faithful witneſs will often check him in his career, and point out to him the fatal conſequences of his preſent conduct. This barrier being once removed, this friendly monitor being ſilenced or perverted, there is no determining where, in the career of vice, the unhappy wretch will ſtop. From one illicit gratification he advances to another, till he labors under that greateſt curſe which is permitted to afflict the human race, *a ſtupid inſenſibility of mind.* When a man is thus paſt feeling, he is paſt hope indeed. Had inſtruction been timely and judiciouſly adminiſtered, and its leſſons attended to, the individual might have been ſaved from his preſent ſhame and diſgrace; his character might have been molded to piety and virtue; and an uſeful member of ſociety might have been formed.

The neceſſity and importance of inſtruction will appear, if we conſider how liable men are to be drawn aſide from the paths of wiſ-

dom and virtue, by the cunning or artifice of thoſe whoſe abilities are employed in pleading the cauſe of infidelity, in defacing the moral world, and working for the kingdom of darkneſs. Though in no age of the world have the ſuffrages of philoſophic enquiry been more decidedly and generally in favour of religion than the preſent, yet there are men of an inferior order, who are deſirous of diſtinguiſhing themſelves by ſcepticiſm; who imagine, that by rejecting all that is ſacred, they give proof of ſuperior abilities, and eſtabliſh their claim to wit and diſcernment. Numbers, in order to give the rein to their paſſions, and to gratify themſelves in all the indulgences of vice, liſten to theſe adverſaries of our faith, and are eaſily perverted by their arguments. If infidelity propoſes her objections with ſuch advantage, it is of the utmoſt importance that religious principles be clearly underſtood, and well eſtabliſhed, by an intimate and familiar acquaintance with the ſeveral reaſons on which they are founded. Perhaps, there never was a time when more pains were requiſite in inſtilling moral and religious inſtruction, and when leſs were taken.

I proceed in the

Second place, to define the period when inſtruction may, with moſt advantage, be communicated.

Reaſon,

Reaſon, and the courſe of nature, evidently point out the earlieſt period as the moſt proper for this purpoſe. The minds of children, have with great truth and juſtice, been compared to white or fair paper, on which we may imprint what characters we pleaſe: theſe characters will prove ſo laſting as not to be effaced without deſtroying the beauty of the whole. By neglecting to impreſs ideas upon the mind as ſoon as it is capable of receiving them, the advantage is loſt which ariſes from the ingenuouſneſs and curioſity natural to youth; and from that tenderneſs which makes the impreſſion ſo deep as not to be effaced without much difficulty. It were much leſs prejudicial to poſtpone the improvement of the earlieſt period, if the mind would continue vacant; a blank as it were: and better it were blank for ever than deformed by vice. But the fact is, that the mind of man is ever active, and if it be not ſtored with good principles, it will of itſelf adopt bad ones. If good impreſſions are not made, either ignorance or folly will prevail, or error and prejudice will take poſſeſſion of the mind, and afterwards prevent the knowledge of religious truths from ſtriking upon it with their innate force and luſtre. So that, if ever ſuch are happy enough to be reſtored to proper conſideration, they will diſcover, not only how much they are behind hand, but how much they have

to undo; and that the greateſt difficulty ariſes from this cauſe. The mind of man then being an active principle, and diſcovering a natural deſire and thirſt after knowledge, this deſire ſhould be gratified, by filling it with wiſdom. The proper ſeaſon to begin this work muſt be in the earlieſt years of life, while the mind is ſincere, innocent, and open, having no biaſs from paſſion or prejudice.

The obvious advantages of early inſtruction, the confuſion conſequent on delay, the inconveniencies that ariſe from having the mind preoccupied by improper furniture, and the importance of firſt impreſſions, are not the only reaſons which urge to the cultivation of the underſtanding, and the improvement of the diſpoſitions of the young. To learn is natural to them; they may be brought with eaſe to bear the yoke of wholeſome diſcipline; but when they have had time to form their own habits, and to chooſe their own maxims, they will ſpurn at inſtruction. When arrived to years of maturity, it will be painful to paſs under a diſcipline that was deemed irrequiſite in more tender years: their ſtubbornneſs and pride will increaſe every day, till a principle of ſhame will lead them to conceal, if not to diſavow their ignorance; when even the gentleſt hints cannot be ſuggeſted without exciting their hatred, and rouzing their bad paſſions.

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When the buſineſs of inſtruction is protracted, the taſk becomes every day more and more difficult; and the burden which their indolence and inactivity rejected, while comparatively it was not hard to be borne, they will hardly have courage to undertake with ſo much additional weight. Conſider, for one moment, the conſequence! From their firſt entrance into the world, they are left to the guidance of their own corrupt appetites and paſſions; they are expoſed to the contagion of bad company, without one rule to direct, or caution to warn them. What muſt become of the youth who is thus turned out without principles or reſtraints? Will he not ruſh eagerly into the paths of vice? Will he not quickly paſs the bounds of decency and ſhame? Having no firm ties by which he is held to virtue and religion, when the hour of trial approaches, when the pleaſures or profits of the world are preſented to his view in their moſt lively and tempting colours, he falls the eaſy victim of every temptation that aſſails him, and is hurried on by his ungovernable paſſions from one vice to another, till he plunges into ſome gulph whence there is no eſcape. He entails miſery on himſelf, and drags on a wretched exiſtence, the grief of his kindred and friends, an object of pity to all who behold him, ſhunned and forſaken by the virtuous and good, and pointed to as a living warning againſt diſſoluteneſs and vice. He continues a ſtranger to thoſe

pleaſing

pleaſing reflections which reſult from a well ſpent life, and a conſciouſneſs of upright behaviour: reflections, which in the innocent breaſt, illumine with chearfulneſs the vale of tears, gild the chambers of ſickneſs, and diffuſe the ray of hope around the bed of death. The proſpect of futurity fills the diſſolute mind with anxiety and diſquietude; dire deſpair adds pungency to the pain of diſeaſe; and all the wretched conſolation he derives, ſprings from the hope of annihilation. This is, indeed, a melancholy picture. But is it not a true reſemblance? Do not obſervation and fact aſſure us it is drawn from the life? It is a picture that too frequently preſents itſelf to ſuch as are often called to viſit the chambers of ſickneſs, as are converſant with the world, or the faithful page of hiſtory. In numberleſs inſtances, we may ſafely aſſert, has a want of inſtruction been attended with theſe, and ſuch like effects.

Is a ſtate of ignorance ſo dreadful in its nature, and pernicious in its conſequences? How much indebted are we to Almighty God, for that Goſpel which is able to make us *wiſe unto ſalvation.*

There cannot be a more effectual proviſion made for our inſtruction, than that with which we are furniſhed in the Goſpel. Many of the admired writers of antiquity will teach

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us what we muſt do to be great, and rich and eſteemed in the world; but of whom ſhall we learn to be wiſe and bleſſed? Where is the philoſopher that will teach us what we muſt do to be ſaved? To whom ſhall we go for this invaluable knowledge? To whom but to that Saviour who is the unerring Teacher of mankind, the true Light of the world, our only ſure Guide to immortal bleſſedneſs. The Goſpel of Chriſt has not only brought life and immortality to light, but has pointed out the way to a future ſtate; and is, in both theſe reſpects, infinitely ſuperior to all the laboured ſyſtems of human reaſon. By the confeſſion of his enemies, our Saviour ſpake as never man ſpake. In his diſcourſes we ſee the moſt refined philoſophy joined with the higheſt philanthrophy. The religion of our great Maſter is apparently worthy of God, whom it claims for its Author. Its doctrines are ſo reaſonable, and its tendency ſo excellent, that it muſt have come from Heaven. Happy are they who live under ſo excellent and glorious an inſtitution!

Is inſtruction ſo important to man, as an inhabitant of this world, and a candidate for another? It becomes the duty of parents to be early, conſcientious, and induſtrious in communicating it to their children. Every one will allow, that knowledge is not born with children; that they are only endowed with abilities fitted

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to attain it; and that knowledge of every kind muſt be attained by inſtructing and improving the underſtanding. Children, therefore, muſt be trained up, and formed, by proper exerciſes, for uſefulneſs and happineſs in ſociety. Parents, for this purpoſe, have been endowed with inſtincts which convert all the pains and labour they take about their offſpring into ſources of pleaſure and delight. While, on the other hand, theſe ſervices ſtamp on the young and tender mind, impreſſions of gratitude, which incline it to love, and reverence its benefactors, and to pay obedience to their dictates. Theſe relations, and their attendant duties, appear, even in this view of them, happily important, and worthy of the great Contriver; as they are ſo exquiſitely calculated to unite men together, in the bonds of civil union; to render permanent and laſting their ſocial connections; without which our ſpecies would differ very little from the brute creation, our capacities and powers would ſcarcely be of any advantage, and our nature would for ever be precluded from riſing to eminence and dignity. If it be a matter then, of acknowledged importance, that men ſhould act wiſely and prudently; that moral and religious obligation ſhould be ſtrengthened; that rational piety and purity of manners ſhould prevail; it becomes a matter of moment that inſtruction ſhould be liberally communicated, and gratefully received. To procure a temporary accommodation for their children,

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to aggrandize their fortunes, and provide for their well being upon earth, parents will riſe up early, and ſit up late; they will ſacrifice their health and eaſe, and put all the powers of body and mind on the ſtretch. To amaſs riches for their offspring, is the firſt wiſh of thouſands. This employs their time and their attention. This fills up all their thoughts; and if they pray, this is the burden of their prayers. Whatever the lips may utter, the heart pays its devotion to mammon. With what anxiety do they purſue the glittering object, which dazzles as it flies, and leads them into many a temptation and many a ſnare! How are all the powers of invention exerciſed for arts to catch this flying prize! What a variety of means are uſed, lawful and unlawful! What anxiety and care leſt theſe ſhould prove unſucceſsful! How much is it to be lamented, that amidſt all this labour and anxiety, religion ſhould ſo often be excluded; that what is of *primary* importance, which relates to God, and a future ſtate, ſhould be entirely neglected, or attended to with indifference. It is, in truth, matter of ſerious regret, that there are many who would be diſquieted extremely, if their children failed in the management of their worldly affairs, if they expoſed themſelves to contempt and hatred, or if, in any way, they ſullied their reputation, and forfeited their good name, who can be witneſs, without feeling any concern, or manifeſting *any* emotion, to their ignorance of

religion, and to their open neglect of its duties. How often are these men (in whom the love of wealth is the moving spring, the governing principle) to be told, that it is not the adding house to house, and field to field, that it is not the vast extent of mighty power, nor the command even of the whole world, that will compensate for the want of a religious education. The time is fast approaching when the children of this world will see that their wisdom was the worst of folly; when they will wish to exchange all they have acquired, and all they enjoy, for the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; for one peaceful reflection; for one solid hope with regard to eternity.

Would to God that men could be persuaded to proceed in the affairs of religion as they do in the common concerns of life; exert their faculties in appreciating its value, in determining the line of conduct it marks out for them, and in going over the various advantages that result from it. Parents would then lead their children, by insensible degrees, into a habit of hearkening to instruction; they would be punctual and careful in teaching them the knowledge of their Creator; in leading them to think of his awful and incomprehensible nature, his infinite excellencies and perfections, and those various relations in which he stands to his creatures. They would lead them to an early acquaintance with the

the great deſign for which they were brought into the preſent ſtate, and the intereſting nature of this life, as it is connected with a future immortality. They would regularly watch over, and aſſiſt their firſt eſſays in the paths of virtue. They would ſtudiouſly guide their feet in the way of truth, and render all the inſtructions and ordinances of religion pleaſant and agreeable to them. They would be ſolicitous, above all things, to make them rational, charitable, and devout. Then, however inferior their ſtations, however narrow and penurious their circumſtances, they will have no cauſe to regret the diſadvantages with which they have introduced them into life, nor the ſlender proviſion they are able to make for them, nor the humble rank which they are obliged to ſupport. They may not be able to give them rich patrimonies, and wealthy poſſeſſions, yet they will leave them a legacy of far ſuperior value; they have given them a religious education, which, if properly improved, will make them happy in themſelves, bleſſings to their connections, good members of ſociety, and heirs of immortal happineſs.

It may, perhaps, be ſaid, that all the care and pains which parents take in the education of their children, often proves ineffectual, though early taken, and wiſely and ſteadily purſued. Admitting this to be the caſe, ſtill it is incumbent upon parents to diſcharge their duty. The advantage in point of *probability*, is certainly on the

ſide of a good education; which is ſeldom without ſome good effect, and often proves an ineſtimable bleſſing. "Train up a child in the way "he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not "depart from it." But ſhould the caſe prove otherwiſe, ſhould the blooming hopes of parents be blaſted, and their towering expectations diſappointed, ſhould thoſe children, whoſe minds have been carefully ſown with the ſeeds of piety and virtue, go over to the tents of wickedneſs, as they muſt offend againſt their own reaſon and conviction, there is good ground to hope, that impreſſions made upon the mind by a good education will not be effaced, but that they will finally be brought to ſerious conſideration.

The young muſt be apprized, that inſtruction can anſwer very little purpoſe, if it be not received with a proper ſpirit, with right diſpoſitions, and a docile behaviour. The efforts of parents will be in vain, their kind endeavours ineffectual, if children are negligent on their part, if they are treacherous and unfaithful to themſelves, turning a deaf ear to the admonitions, and diſregarding the councils given them. How unnatural is ſuch a conduct! How indecent and unbecoming in every view! To endeavour to induce you to be obedient and religious, inſtead of denunciations and threats, I would adopt the language of mild and gentle perſuaſion, and aſk, if you can behold any thing

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to prize and value in the eſteem of the virtuous. If you think there is any pleaſure in maintaining their good opinion, if you are ambitious to be claſſed among them, if you can be taught to believe there is any ſatisfaction in anſwering the expectations of thoſe who love you, and are anxious for your welfare, if it be a matter of gratification not to diſappoint their affectionate wiſhes, if it would be matter of joy to you to become the delight and comfort of your aged parents, their ſolace under the burden of growing years; if theſe are objects deſerving of your ambition, if they carry any charms that can ſtrike your eyes, hearken to the voice of wiſdom, liſten to the admonition of your teachers, ſearch after knowledge with avidity, ſeek for it as for hid treaſure. Suffer me to leave this maxim impreſſed upon your minds, a maxim verified by the experience of all ages: "Wiſdom is the principal thing, "therefore get wiſdom, and with all your get-"ting, get underſtanding."

But this is not all. Speculative knowledge is comparatively of little importance. That the head may be well ſtored with intellectual and religious furniture, when the heart is deſtitute of every Chriſtian grace, is a remark that is illuſtrated and verified by the temper and conduct of many zealous profeſſors. But an enlightened head is a poor compenſation for a depraved heart. "Though "you ſpeak with the tongues of men and angels, "and underſtand all myſteries, and all know-"ledge,

" ledge, yet if you have not grace to improve that " knowledge, you are nothing in the ſight of " God." I may ſay of knowledge without practice, what the apoſtle ſaith of faith without works, " That it is dead being alone." Practical wiſdom, therefore, is that which you are principally to ſeek. This wiſdom is nothing but religion, or that practice which is ſuited to our natures, and the way to ſecure our intereſt in both worlds. " Behold the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, " and to depart from evil that is underſtand- " ing." It is the wiſdom of practice, not of ſpeculation; the underſtanding of the heart, rather than the head. Seek, in the firſt place, the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs; and I aſſure you, upon the promiſe of a God who cannot lie, that every thing elſe that is really needful, ſhall then be added unto you.

Finally, if the neceſſity of inſtruction be founded on the conſtitution of things, if it be ſo indiſpenſibly requiſite to the good conduct and ſafety of man in ſociety, to ſecure him againſt miſtakes and deceptions, to render him acceptable to God, and beloved by men, the more general it becomes the better. If it be neceſſary to enjoy happineſs in the preſent life, and immortal bleſſedneſs in another, the religious inſtruction of children, poor as well as rich, becomes a manifold bleſſing, and a neceſſary duty.

To

To provide inſtruction for thoſe who would otherwiſe die without it, is the deſign of that Charitable Inſtitution, on the behalf of which I am called upon this day to ſolicit your generous contribution. With the origin and deſign of this inſtitution, moſt of you are well acquainted. It was firſt eſtabliſhed in the year 1687, in the reign of James the Second; when a ſchool was ſet up by Poulter, a Jeſuit, and public notice given that he would inſtruct the children of the poor gratis. The real object of this ſeminary was to eſtabliſh a religion big with abſurdity, ſuperſtition, and idolatry. With a view to counteract its influence, and to fortify the minds of the children of Proteſtant parents againſt the pernicious principles of the Church of Rome, three gentlemen, Mr. Arthur Shallet, Mr. Samuel Warburton, and Mr. Ferdinando Holland, opened this ſchool. The number of ſcholars was at firſt 40; it is now increaſed to about 180. They are taught to read, write, and cypher. The girls are qualified for the offices of induſtry; and all are inſtructed in the principles of our holy religion. This ſchool (which is the firſt in which the Proteſtant Diſſenters were concerned) is conducted upon the moſt liberal principles. The children of indigent parents, ſuch as watermen, fiſhermen, and others, are admitted into it, without any diſtinction of parties. It is ſupported by the bequeſts and ſubſcriptions of private

vate perſons, with one annual collection at this place. Very little need be ſaid to convince you of the utility and importance of ſuch an inſtitution. The parents of theſe children are not able to procure inſtruction for them; if the work is not taken up by others, they muſt die without it. What can you expect from thoſe children who are always left expoſed to the diſadvantages of groſs ignorance, and to all the temptations connected with poverty and indolence, but that they will be ruined in principle and practice. If they have neither the knowledge nor the fear of God impreſſed upon their minds, if they are not trained up in the way they ſhould go, the conſequences muſt be dreadful to themſelves and the community. Under your patronage, theſe children, I truſt, will become ſober and modeſt, honeſt and diligent, humble and devout. Such as might have robbed or injured you, may become profitable members of ſociety, uſeful in the community to which they belong, to the village, or town, or city, or kingdom where their lot may be caſt. Out of this little nurſery of virtue and good manners, there may ariſe ſome eminent citizens, who may become benefactors to that inſtitution where they were educated in virtue and religion. In this ſchool, the children are made acquainted with the truth as it is in Jeſus; they here learn to truſt in him, to love him, and to ſerve him. They are taught thoſe practical truths

truths in which the eſſentials of our holy religion conſiſt.

To enumerate the various arguments that might be adduced in ſupport of ſo laudable an inſtitution, would be treſpaſſing upon your time and patience; beſides, it is unneceſſary: you came here prepared to contribute towards its ſupport, readily and chearfully. Thoſe who are inſtrumental in turning many to righteouſneſs, are promiſed a great reward; "they ſhall ſhine "as the brightneſs of the firmament, they ſhall "be as the ſtars for ever and ever."

To the children, on whoſe account we are this day aſſembled, I would ſay a few words. My young friends, you have heard how important it is that children ſhould have a religious education, that they ſhould ſeek, in the firſt place, the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs. Do you wiſh to profit by the inſtruction you receive? Attend then to the following direction. Form an habit of ſerious conſideration. Inconſideration and thoughtleſſneſs are the ruin of young perſons. Often think on the great end for which you came into the world, of the worth of your ſoul, the certainty of death, its awful conſequences. Make theſe things familiar to your minds; they will make you ſerious, thoughtful, and wiſe. Be careful of the company you keep. If you would be wiſe, you muſt walk with the wiſe. Shun, as much as poſſible, the converſation of wicked per-

ſons; when they entice you, do not conſent. Be afraid of their ſociety. Evil communications have corrupted the manners, and have ruined the ſouls of many young perſons. Often read your Bible, that is a treaſure of divine wiſdom. Love your Bibles, theſe are the words of eternal life; they are able to make you wiſe unto ſalvation. Frequent the worſhip of God, with conſtancy and ſerioufneſs. Be concerned that you may be made wiſer and better by your attendance in the houſe of God. Above all, fervently and daily pray to your heavenly Father. Do not neglect ſecret prayer, I beſeech you. Pray that your heavenly Father would be the Guide of your youth; that he would ſhield you, amidſt all the dangers to which you are expoſed. Go to Him, this evening, and ſay, bleſs me, even me, alſo, O my Father. And I join my prayers with yours, and every pious parent will join with me in intreating, that you may live before God, that He would lift upon you the light of His countenance, take you under His gracious patronage and protection, preſerve your perſons, your reputations, your comforts, give you the benefit of early piety in this world, and in the world to come, life everlaſting.

AMEN.

FINIS.

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